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A

New-Bears Gift

FOR

YOUTH.

Being the Substance of a

SERMON,

Preached at the Funeral of

M<sup>RS.</sup> Elizabeth Bell,

(Aged Sixteen Years, odd Months)

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St. M. Overies, in Southwark, Decemb. 1. 1686.

Upon those Words (chosen by her) of Solomons.

Ecclef. 12. 1. *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy Youth, while the Evil days come not.*

By Samuel Peck Minister of Poplar. n



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# The Substance of a Sermon,

Preached at the Interment of

M<sup>rs.</sup> Elizabeth Bell, &c.

Ecclef. 12. 1. *Remember thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth, while the Evil Days come not.*

**S**Aint Paul, who knew by experience the great disadvantage of losing the *Prime of our Age* in the ways of *Sin*, commands *Titus* to use his utmost endeavours, to persuade Men to an *early Piety*, betimes to mind the best things, and lead a Life becoming the Gospel of Christ, saying: *Young men exhort to be sober minded; (Tit. 2. 6.)* using such a word, [ *σπουδαίον* ] as implys a continual Consultation with a Man's self, for the due government or well-ordering of his whole Course, that Wisdom, Vertue, Religion, and Piety, may shine forth in all his words, ways, and actions; or prevail upon him, (as the Apostle expresseth it) *To deny all Ungodliness and Worldly Lust, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this World.* (Ver. 12.) An Exhortation, or Caution, not unlike this of the Wise Man's: *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy Youth, while the Evil days come not.* And indeed Youth have need, great need to be often thus admonished; for the sooner Satan takes possession of any Soul, and the longer he keeps it, the harder 'tis to dispossess and cast him out; which makes him so diligent and desirous to corrupt Youth, and to steal away the

*hearts of young Persons, from their Maker ; hoping, that if he be first served by them, he shall at last serve himself upon them : Therefore, if any Motive, if any Wile, Stratagem, or Argument will prevail, he will see that shall not be wanting. He will watch, and wait all opportunities and occasions, make large and fair promises of Profit, Honour, and Pleasure : and allures them to smaller Sins first, thereby making way for Temptations to greater ; sticks not to alledge and pervert the very Word of God, to draw them to, and encourage them in a licentious Course, or sinful Liberty, saying : God himself makes an allowance for your Years. Rejoice, O Young-man, in thy Youth, and let thine Heart cheer thee in the dayes of thy Youth : walk in the sight of thine Eyes, and in the ways of thine own Heart. As if God gave young Persons a Liberty to Sin : But in the mean time conceals from them the following Memento of the Wise-man ; But know, that for all these things God will bring thee to Judgment ; Eccles. 11. 9. And therefore Remember now thy Creator in the dayes of thy Youth.*

From which words, two things offer themselves to our consideration ; (*Viz.*)

1. There is in *Young Persons* a proneness to forget their Creator, and their Duty towards Him.
2. That God requires and looks for *Service* from young Persons. Of each of these, I shall speak somewhat briefly.

*Prop. I.* **T**HERE is in *Young Persons* a natural proneness to forget their Creator, and their Duty towards Him.

This appears by the Advice frequently given in *Scripture*, to, and concerning *Youth* ; sometimes by *Solomon*, who speaking to *Parents* and *Governours*, adviseth, that they *Train up Children in the way they should go*, (the way of Piety and Religion,) and  
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when they are Old, they will not depart from it. For Young Ones like new Vessels, long retain the relish of those Principles or Instructions, that are first poured into them. Sometimes again the Wise-man directing his Discourse to young Ones themselves, *Quo semel est imbuta recens servabit Odorem, resta diu----* faith, *My Son, be wise, hear Instruction, and incline thine ear to Understanding: my Son, if Sinners entice thee, consent thou not; Prov. 1. 10. Seek Wisdom, and lift up thy voice for Understanding; Chap. 2. and 3. Seek her as Silver: dig for her as for hid Treasure: she is more precious than Rubies; all things thou canst desire, are not to be compared to her; length of days are in her Right Hand, and in her Left Hand Riches and Honour. And in the Text he counsels thee to Remember thy Creator in the days of thy Youth; That is, Be mindful of thy Duty towards him; Shun and avoid with all thy care, the Sins, the Vices, and Vanities of this Age, and devote thy self to God by an Early Repentance, and an Holy Life.* In like manner David calls upon Young-men and Maidens to praise the Lord, or to live his praises, *Psal. 148. 12.* And St. Paul exhorts young persons to be sober-minded, *Tit. 2. 6.* Which implies Evangelical affections, or an holy frame and temper of mind.

Now, I say, such frequent Exercitations and Calls, as these, to young persons in the *Word of God*, does imply a proneness in them to forget God, and their Duty to Him, in their Youth, to be regardless and unmindful of Religion, and the serious practice of it. Yea; and daily experience gives us but too sad a proof of the Truth of this. Look abroad into the *World*: consider the generality of our Youth in this Age, what they are, what manner of Lives they lead, how vain, lewd, and debauched the most are in their Conversation; how rare it is to find one amongst many that is solid, sober, and religious, that makes real Conscience of avoiding all known Sin, and of performing Holy Duties, or of exercising himself

self to *Godliness*, as becomes his *Christian Profession*. Nay, do not many of them *walk*, and *act*, and *talk* more like *Atheists*, or *Infidels*, than *Christians*, as if they believed no future *State*, no Judgment, no Punishment, or Reward to come? And what is the ground of all this *irreligion* and *prophaness*, but an utter forgetfulness of the God that *made* them, and will *shortly judge* them? A forgetfulness of their own *Mortality*, and approaching Dissolution, which (when ever it comes) will make them as happy as Angels, or as miserable as Devils, for ever? I know (*Young men*) you have sometimes some *Convictions* wrought in you by the *Word of God*, and thereupon promise fair, talk of returning to God, and of forsaking your youthful Lusts and Vanities, yet let not about this *great* and *needful Work* in good earnest; but this your goodness is as the Morning-Cloud, and early Dew, which quickly passeth away. Sirs, as in the *Presence of God*, ask your Consciences if this be not *Truth*. Do you not alwaies find something in your *hearts* ready to stifle all your purposes and promises of Repentance and Amendment of Life, so that you are delaying from this day to another, and still delaying, hoping for a time at last: till God take you away with his stroke: till you drop into your Graves, and all your thoughts perish? And what is the reason of this *procrastination*, but an Oblivion of your Creator? The sooner you *repent* and are *pardoned*, Is it not the better? The sooner you are *reconciled* to God, are in the way to Heaven, and obtain a well-grounded Hope of Gods saving-love in Christ to your Souls, Is it not the better? What is the ground then of your delay to be *religious*, of your *forgetfulness* of God, and of your Duty to him and your own Souls? Why,

1. *Solomon* tells you, one Reason is *Sloth* and *Idleness*: (*Prov. 6. 10.*) You are loath to buckle to the Yoke of Gods Commandments; you look upon him as an *hard Master*; account his ways too strict and holy; his Injunctions and Institutions unreasonable and

and grievous, and so are unwilling to *submit* and *conform* to them.

2. Another may be excessive Love to *youthful Lusts* and *Pleasures*; These stolln Waters are sweet to your Souls; so that tho' you hear *your Sins* Reproved, and think of forsaking them, yet (God knows) that's all, you do but think of it: for *your immoderate love* to, and *delight* in them, obstructs your doing it.

3. Confidence of long Life, and that you have time enough before you, and Repentance *hereafter* will do as well as *now*. God; upon true Repentance, forgives all; *Let the Wicked forsake his way, and the Unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn unto the Lord, he will have Mercy upon him: and to our God, He will abundantly pardon; Isa. 55. 7.* This is Gods promise, and it holds good to the Old as well as *Young* Penitent or Convert. Since therefore my Sins may be pardoned, and my Eternal State secured by *repenting* any time before I dye, as well as now, why should I imbitter my youthful days with the unpleasant *severities* of Religion, and *sour acts* of Repentance and Mortification? Not I; *Old Age* suits *melancholly* and *sorrow* much better than *Youth*; then I may hearken to *your Advice*, but not before.

4. The many Escapes that *young persons* have from *Dangers* and *dangerous Sickneses*. Nature is *strong* and *vigorous* in them, and they wade through all: and when the *Danger* is over, they forget the *vows* and *promises* their Lips have made in the day of their distress: and that Reformation and Holiness which they were so forward to put on and engage in, in their *Adversity*, they are as ready to forget and put off again in the day of their *prosperity*. Well, but remember what *Solomon* saith here: *The Evil days will come; Sickness and Death will come, and how soon you know not.* You have here an Example before your Eyes, that *Death* lays his cold hand upon *Youth*; And daily experience tells you, that For *One* that dyes in his *Old Age*, there are *Hundreds* dye in their *Youth*; therefore, saith he, *Now in thy Youth, remember thy Creator, while the Evil days come not.* And this brings me to the second Observable in these words. Namely; Prop,



Prop. II. **T**hat God expects and looks for *Service* from young persons : That these should set their *Hearts* and *Affections* upon Him, honour, glorifie, and serve Him, by doing his *Will*, and keeping his *Commandments* ; for so this Phrase (*Remember thy Creator*) imports *Affection*, *Practice*, *Love*, and *Obedience*. That of *Moses* may serve for a *Comment* upon this Text of *Solomon* ; *Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his Commandments, his Judgments, and his Statutes, which I command thee this day.* (*Dent. 8. 11.*) Mark Sirs, to *Remember thy Creator* then, is, to keep his *Statutes*, and to obey his *Commandments*, and that in your *Youth*, whilst all the *Powers* and *Faculties* of thy *Body* and *Soul* are *strong*, *active*, and *vigorous*, and most fit for his *Service*. Under the *Law*, God called for the *first Fruits*, and for the *Firstling* of the *Flock* ; the *Gospel* of it, is this : That so soon as we come to years of *understanding*, to dispose of our *hearts* and *affections*, we should offer them first to God. And you have many *Examples* of this in *Scripture* ; *Josiah*, at Eight years old, did that which was right in the sight of God ; *Samuel* heard and obeyed Gods Voice when a Child ; *Timothy*, of a Child, knew the *Scriptures* ; And the Children of the *Elect Lady* were found walking in the *Truth*, (2. *Epistle* of *St. John*.) And why may I not propound to your imitation, this young *Gentleman*, (not full 17. years of Age) whose *Remains* lye yet before you, who (doubtless) *Remembered her Creator*, and had a *Sense* of God, and of Religion, upon her mind in her *Youth* ? I confess, I knew her not in her life ; but being twice with her in her *last Sickness*, I perceived that, in her (that *strong love* to God, those vehement desires after Him, and unusual consolations from Him, to her *Soul*, before *Death*) as wrought in me a *persuasion*, that she walked with God in her life ; Her *sweet* and *inward peace* of *Conscience*, her *hearty* and *holy Ejaculations*, her *pious* and *Heavenly Discourse*, her *freedom* from the *fears* of *Death*, her *contempt* of this *Life* and *World*, and all the *Vanities* of it, her *impatient longings* to depart, and to be with Christ

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(insomuch, that she begged of me not to pray for her life or recovery,) that she might enjoy him more fully in Glory; I say, these are rare to be found in a person so young; or in any indeed, but those who have kept up a close Communion with God, and have walked in Christ, as they have received him. And if that saying be true, *Qualis vita, finis ita: As is the life, so is the death*; we may believe her Life was Holy, whose End was so Heavenly, joyous, & full of comfort; and consequently, that she is arrived at the Haven of all Joy and Felicity, in the Morning of her Age. O what a support must this needs be to you, who bewail her loss, or rather the loss of her! for your loss is her gain! And, O that all you young Ones, who knew her, would follow her in this, to Remember your Creator in the days of your youth! Considering, That,

1. 'Tis most reasonable, That He who made you, should be first served by you; that all the affections and motions of your hearts and minds, all the works and actions of your lives should be primarily towards Him, in whom you live, move, and have your Beings, the Father and Fountain of all your Mercies in this Life, and whose love in Christ Jesus is the only Foundation of Hope, for Mercy and Glory in the Life to come.

2. The time of Youth is the most seasonable time for Gods Service; you lose the best part of your life, if you lose your Youth; *Optima neque; now* you are most capable of any thing that is good: most *dies miseris mor-* capable of divine Instructions, of performing holy Duties, of talibus avi pri- keeping Gods Commandments, and of discharging what *ma Fugit.*--- ever is incumbent upon you in your Christian Calling. Remember this, young-men, if you forget God, and neglect your Duty towards God now, you can't imagine what an hard matter you will find it to buckle to the Yoke, and sustain the burthen of a Gospel-Obedience, and to frame your lives to godliness hereafter. If Christs Yoke be easie, and his burthen light, it is so to them who bear it in their Youth. If you are Satan's Scholars young, you will be his Souldiers when you are old; if you follow him now, you will fight for him then. For tho' you now think it an easie matter to repent, that 'tis in your own

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power, and you can forsake your Sins, change your Course, and become *new Creatures* at your pleasure: yet let me tell you, this is only a *Diabolical Delusion*: you will (when you come to't) find it very difficult, and next to impossible; oft Read that of the Prophet: *Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? Then may you who are accustomed to do Evil, learn to do well.* Jer. 13. 23. Here God sufficiently declares the difficulty of it, as easie as the Tempter makes it; And whom will you believe, God or the Devil, the Author of all Truth, or the Father of all Lyes? Again,

3. The time of *Youth* is the most acceptable time; the *Service* you now do for God, is the most pleasing. What the Apostle saith of the day of Grace, in respect to God, that may I say of the day of Youth: *Behold, now is the accepted time.* The *Evening* or *Noon-tide* of thine *Age* may be; but to be sure the *Morning* will be accepted. Now to seek the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness, before *Satan* and the *World* have captivated your affections, & *ravished away* your hearts to Sin and Vanity: now to dedicate them to God by an *Early Piety*, and the Power of *godliness*, will be as a reasonable, so an acceptable *Sacrifice* or *Service*; (*Rom.* 12. 1, 2.) And this you may be sure of; the rather, because God calls for, and commands it in the Text, saying, *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.* O then Sirs, if God requires and expects *Service* from you, 'tis high Disobedience in you to deny it; yea, and prodigious Folly in you to refuse or delay it. God commands, his Spirit strives, and his Ministers intreat; but *young Ones* will not hearken, they will not obey, they will not learn to fear an Oath, to flee the impurities, excesses, and follies of a wanton Age, and youthful inclinations. Certainly, Friends, you must needs see the folly of this, if you would give your selves so much time, & do your souls so much right, as to consider after this manner,

1. That all the time you spend in Sin, or out of Gods *Service*, is utterly lost, or spent to no purpose, nothing of the *great Work* done, which you came into this World for: which is to glorify your *Maker*, and make your *Eternal Salvation* sure. Now, what folly is it to lose that time, which *well improved* and *employed*, may be as much worth to you as *Heaven* and endless *Happiness*? 2. The

2. The longer you defer *your Repentance and turning to God*, the longer do you put off true Peace, Joy, & Happiness from *your selves*. Peace, Joy, and Happiness are *very desirable*, and you think you have more of these in the ways of *Sin*, than you ever expect to find in *Gods Service*. This is also your Folly : for *The Service of God is perfect freedom, and his Wayes are pleasantness, and his Paths peace*. O what is the enjoyment of a *vile and beastly Lust*, to the fruition of the Chiefest Good, G O D, blessed for ever ! What is carnal Peace and Joy with the *World*, to the Joy and Peace of the *Holy Ghost*, which Joy is *unspeakable and glorious*, and the Peace such as passeth *all understanding* ? Or, What are the *pleasures of Sin* for a *moment*, to the pleasures at God's Right Hand for *evermore* ? What the Smiles of the *World*, to the Light of God's *Countenance*, the Sense of his Love, better than Life itself ? All which *Spiritual Joy, Peace, Happiness, and Pleasure*, you put off from your souls, so long as you forget *your Creator*, and decline his *Service* : and (like the *prodigal Son*) are eating Husks, when you might be feeding on the fatted Calf ; and are gathering of *Onions*, while you might be gathering *Heavenly Manna* ; And, Is not this *Folly* ?

3. If ever you do intend to *serve God*, or become *Religious*, 'tis *great Folly* not to begin betimes, because there is no *reason* can be given for doing this *hereafter*, which is not a *reason* for doing it *now*. As for instance.

1. Will this be the way to please God *hereafter* ? So 'tis the way to please Him *now*.
2. Must you *perish* if you do it not *hereafter* ? So you must *now*, if you dye in *your Sins*, without Repentance. And what Assurance have you of *your life* for a *day* longer ?
3. Will the assurance of *Heaven*, and the *hoped-for Glory*, be desirable and comfortable to thy Soul *hereafter* ? So it will *now* ; it will put *more Joy* into thine heart, than when thy Corn, Wine, Oyl, or Riches encrease. So that, whatever may be an Argument or Motive to Repentance and Holiness *hereafter*, is, and ought to be an Argument and Motive to it *now*. Lastly,

4. Consider the Motive in the Text; *The evil days will come, and the years draw nigh, wherein you shall say, I find no pleasure.* Come they will, Sicknes, Death, and Judgment, that is certain, these are unavoidable: And whether in thy Youth, Manhood, or Old Age, is altogether uncertain. And you do but gratifie your *Enemy*, by putting these evil Days far from you; You harden your hearts more, and render this *Work*, if ever it be done, (as done it must be, or you can never be saved) much more hard and difficult. Satan, no doubt, will tell you, You have *time enough*, for you are young, and shall not dye yet; all which he would do, if he knew you should dye to *morrow*, or this *night* before the next *morning*; for he is the Father of Lyes, and his Work is to go about, *Like a roaring Lyon, seeking whom he may devour*; as St. Peter tells you, and bids you *Resist him stedfast in the Faith*: (1 Pet. 5. 8, 9) That is, by believing the written *Word of God*, which adviseth you, *That whatever your hand finds to do, to do it with all your might, for there is no Wisdom, nor Knowledge, nor Working in the Grave, whither we are all a-going*; (Eccles. 9. 10.) *For Man knoweth not his time, as the Fishes taken in an evil Net, and as Birds that are caught in the snare: so are the Sons of Men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.* (Ec. 9. 12.)

Therefore let me intreat you, (and, O that I might prevail with some of the Youth, who hear me this Evening) to take the Wiseman's counsel, to be wise for your Souls betimes, to *Remember now your Creator, before the Evil days come*; wherein the Silver Cord shall be loosed, the golden Bowl broken, the Keepers of the House tremble, the strong men bow themselves, the Almond-Tree flourish, and those that look out at the Windows be darkned. O! before these evil days come, wherein you shall find no pleasure, *Remember your Creator*: By doing those things, by walking in those waies which shall prevent much sin and sorrow to your selves, promote the glory of God, and peace of your own souls here, and secure to them a Blessed and happy Eternity hereafter.

To which Eternal Felicity God of His mercy in His due time bring us All, through the merits of Jesus Christ: To whom, with the Father, and Holy Spirit, be praise, honour, and glory, World without end. Amen.

F I N I S.